

## AN EXTENDED FIELD TRIP IN THE USA

MARCEL VAN DEN BROEK • Marcel@carnivorousplants.org

After attending the 2012 ICPS Conference, I went on the field trip that the NECPS so kindly had organized. Since Matt Kaelin has an article about this organized trip in this issue of CPN, I'll skip that part and will write about my "after trip".

So, you are from Europe, you're in North Carolina and you still have a little less than two weeks holiday left. What do you do? Visit the Grand Canyon? Do some storm chasing? Not this CP-nut.

Together with DJ Frank and Adam Cross, I rented a car and went on an extended field trip.

The first leg was from North Carolina to Georgia and specifically the Atlanta Botanical Garden. For this part of the trip we also had the great company of Robert Gibson, who unfortunately had to leave us after this visit to go on to California.

The first contact with Atlanta was harsh and a good lesson in picking hotels from the Internet. While the hotel looked fine on the web, in reality it was plain filthy. I also wasn't feeling very comfortable, arriving in a "somewhat disadvantaged" neighborhood just before midnight with the only white faces around being that of the four of us is somewhat unnerving.

The next day however totally made up for this less than great meeting with Atlanta. Ron Determann of the Botanical Garden was very kind in giving us a great VIP tour of this amazing institute.

This is really a magnificent garden. We looked at many awesome plants in the parts of the greenhouses that are open to the public. Most notable were an abundance of orchids, a great *Nepenthes* display and a *Heliamphora* display that just left us stunned with the most huge clumps of these plants I have ever seen...and all that just along a walkway in a greenhouse in a big city (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: *Heliamphora* display at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.



Figure 2: *Sarracenia pupurea* subsp. *venosa* var. *montana* at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Next we went behind the scenes. Here Ron has a huge collection of rare *Sarracenia*'s, some originating from sites that no longer exist. Rubra's, leuco's, psittacina's everywhere and sitting at the side of the greenhouse was tray after tray of *Sarracenia pupurea* subsp. *venosa* var. *montana* (Fig. 2). I have never seen so many montana's at one place before, not even in commercial nurseries. A truly living museum of genetic diversity and exactly what projects like the Ark of Life are trying to establish, *ex situ* conservation. Hopefully we can connect these projects in the future. The most impact (in real force) of our behind the scenes trip was the climate control system. Large blowers and humidifiers handle the serene climate in the still greenhouses by making an awful lot of noise and creating massive pressure differences (you actually had to hold on to the doors) in the basement.

After signing the guestbook and saying our thanks and goodbye to Ron and Robert the remaining three of us started on our next big drive to Okefenokee. We had rented a cabin at Stephen C. Foster State Park and wanted to go have a look at the giant minors that get their name from this area. The trip turned out to take longer than we thought and we arrived literally with minutes to spare before closing time. Great accommodations and a really nice park, highly recommended. Next day we started driving around a little and spotted some alligators, birds, deer, and even a couple of cp's but already we were seeing the signs of what our later boat trip would confirm. The area had been hit by a massive fire and since then had received little rain so much of the land was still black and gray. Our first disappointment on this trip, but that's Mother Nature for you. Still a pleasant two days at a beautiful park and I will definitely be back when it has recovered.

After Okefenokee we went to Florida, specifically the Apalachicola part. Here we were driving on the directions kindly provided by Brian Barnes. We looked at several locations and the absolute stunner was a site near Sumatra. This site is well known for its gorgeous red-tubed plants, *Sarrace-*





Figure 3: *Pinguicula planifolia* in the Apalachicola near Sumatra, Florida.

*nia flava* var. *rubricorpora*, and we found lots of them. A site of truly breathtaking beauty. We also found huge, and I do mean huge like the size of your hand, dark colored specimens of *Pinguicula planifolia* (Fig. 3).

This site is well worth getting your feet wet and suffering a minor meltdown in the Florida sun.

The last site we planned on however was our second (and last) disappointment of this trip. We were to visit the famous Tate's Hell *leucophylla*'s. Having found the other sites with relative ease thanks to Brian's clear instructions, we couldn't find a leuco. We even called Brian and did the "take a left, 300 meters" wireless guided tour but still we came up at the same spot. A barren piece of land with heavy construction equipment on it. A later visit by Stewart McPherson, who had been there before, confirmed that the roadside leuco display was indeed wiped out, destroying one of the most accessible *leucophylla* sites in Florida and also one of the genetically most pure populations at that. Luckily there are apparently some of these plants still surviving at more remote spots in this area, but a very sad loss it is.

Our final leg of the journey took us to Alabama. One does get around you might say. Adam had been talking at the conference to Brandy Midura and she really recommended that we visit Splinter Hill. We all knew the site by reputation so a decision was soon made and a hotel arranged. Brandy was even kind enough to join us for the exploration of this famous site when she heard we were going to visit the place, making the long drive from Texas. That actually is something I really like about this hobby and the people in it, everyone is so willing to share their experiences and show people around.

Splinter Hill was indeed stunning. Just a couple of steps from the parking spot a sea of white was greeting us, adding yet another unforgettable memory to an overall great holiday (Fig. 4). Plants



Figure 4: A sea of *Sarracenia leucophylla* at the Splinter Hill Bog Preserve, Alabama.

ranged from very red to almost pure white, with dozens of stunning forms that haven't made it into cultivation. As this is protected land, they probably never will make it into cultivation. Though sadly, we did find here (and in nearly every other place we visited) signs of poaching.

Next morning we were saying goodbye to Brandy and we drove back to Florida where Adam had to take a plane the next day to go home to Perth. After dropping him off, DJ and I raced back to Raleigh, North Carolina to turn in the car early next morning and take the planes that would take us to Los Angeles and Amsterdam. We were fortunate with the things we saw on this trip and our luck held as all three of us made it home before Hurricane Isaac really messed things up.

I would like to thank Brian Barnes, Adam Cross, Ron Determann, DJ Frank, Robert Gibson, and Brandy Midura for their information, company, and helping make this a great holiday trip for me.

